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ABSTRACT

The findings of a study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a visual display illustrating use of the card catalog in a university library are presented. The evaluation focused on the major goal of the display, which was to provide new information to library users. A questionnaire designed to measure a respondent's knowledge of the various aspects of the card catalog presented on the 12 posters was distributed to library patrons and four classes in the sociology and psychology departments a week before the display, three weeks after its removal, and a year later. Findings indicate that 57 percent of the library users looked at the display, as did 30 percent of the class members, with all that looked having a higher percentage of wrong answers as well as a higher percentage of correct ones. The increase in user knowledge after reading the posters was negated by a corresponding increase in incorrect knowledge about the card catalog. Conclusions suggest emphasis on directional rather than instructional aids, with library instruction being viewed as the most effective way to impart information about library resources and their use. (MBR)

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UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

TECHNICAL PAPER NO. 9

REPORT ON VISUAL DISPLAY AT PURDY LIBRARY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

by
Ronald Allen
Reference Department

IR006887

March 1978

REPORT ON VISUAL DISPLAY AT PURDY LIBRARY

A visual display on the use of the card catalog was set up in the Purdy Library in October 1976. This report will give a brief history of the project and present the findings of a study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the display.

History

The idea for creating a visual display dealing with the card catalog had its origins with the Reference Services Committee (RSC). The RSC was a resource committee with library wide representation. One of its charges was to recommend and produce, if suitable, "technical aids and educational programs for library staff and library users to improve services."[1] A subcommittee of the RSC investigated a variety of formats. Filmstrips, slides, posters, etc. were all considered and an initial draft for a slide presentation was prepared. However, after considering such factors as cost and location of the display, it was decided that a poster format would be more feasible than an audio-visual display.

To obtain funding for the project, a proposal was prepared and submitted to the Libraries' Council of Department Heads for approval.[2] The complexity of the card catalog and the lack of any prominent means for a patron to learn about the fundamentals of using the card catalog were two major reasons given for the necessity of a display. The goals of the display were to:

1. Provide new information to people who use the library.

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[1]"Charge to Reference Services Committee," revised January, 1975.

[2]"Proposal for a Visual Display on the Use of the Card Catalog" -- See Appendix Pg. IV-V.

2. Serve as a public relations tool by promoting the availability of other services and aids (e.g. through the library leaflets).

3. Create an environment that makes patrons more comfortable about seeking help when they have a problem.

The evaluation of the display focused on goal number 1, which was considered to be the primary goal of the display.

Previous Work

A search of library and education literature revealed that no systematic study assessing the effectiveness of posters to transmit information had been performed, specifically those which promote and explain the use of library card catalogs. Much investigation has been performed on the effectiveness of other formats (e.g. audio-visual displays)[3] but the work published on posters has focused on the "how to prepare" variety.

Methodology

The basic hypotheses which led to the development of the display was that a poster display could be utilized to increase a person's knowledge about the card catalog. It was assumed that the more information a library patron has about the library, the more effective and efficient they would be in utilizing its resources. In order to test the hypothesis, a questionnaire was developed (See Appendix Pg. III). The questionnaire was designed to measure the respondent's knowledge of various aspects of the card catalog. The questions related to information presented on the posters. About a week before the display was set up and about three weeks after the display had been up the questionnaire was handed out to: 1) a total of four classes in the sociology and psychology departments; 2) Purdy Library patrons. A year later the same questionnaire was handed out to four classes in the sociology and psychology departments. This group served as the control group. One question concerning whether people had looked at the poster display was added to the post-poster questionnaire.

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[3]As an example see Harriet Genung, "Can Machine Teach the Use of Libraries," College and Research Libraries, 28 (January, 1967), 25-30.

None of the groups were instructed to look at the posters since it was intended as a voluntary form of self instruction.

In the initial class samples, there were 239 students who took the pre-poster questionnaire and 202 who took the post-poster questionnaire. The control group numbered 137, the lower number due to the lower enrollment in the classes. The questionnaires were distributed and collected within the same class hour. There was a conscious attempt to select classes which would have a high proportion of students above the freshman level. This was done to insure that most students in the class sample had at least some previous exposure to the library system. The classes selected all had a prerequisite requirement.

The library group was selected on different days (Monday through Thursday) and at various hours (between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.). The questionnaire was distributed on all four floors of the Purdy Library. An attempt was made to distribute the questionnaire at the same hours in the pre and post-poster test. Participants were asked to drop off the questionnaire in a box located by the exit gate or in a box at the Reference desk. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to the pre and post-poster groups with a response rate of 56% and 66% respectively. For the most part, the two samples from the library consisted of different people.

Implementation

It was felt that the actual construction of the display unit and the posters should be done by professionals. A unit of the university, the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT), had the personnel and expertise that were needed to complement the work done by the library. The library's role was to decide what information would be put on the poster, the wording to be used and general directions on the type of display that the library was interested in. Approval for the final product rested with the library. The display consists of twelve posters dealing with various aspects of the card catalog. The headings for each of the posters are as follows:

1. Holdings of the Main Card Catalog
2. Library Location
3. Items Listed in the Card Catalog
4. Works Generally Not Listed in the Card Catalog
5. Divided Catalog
6. Finding the Work in the Catalog
7. Information on a Catalog Card
8. Who is Considered an Author?
9. Filing Order in Author/Title Catalog
10. Filing Rules
11. Types of Subject Entries
12. Periodicals and Newspapers

Eight photographs of people using the library are displayed for visual relief from the posters. The posters are displayed on a six sided free standing unit (three sides are 8' x 3' and three sides are 8' x 1'). The unit was designed to accomodate library leaflets as well as the posters. There are approximately twenty library leaflets available which deal with subjects such as library hours, use of the card catalog, reference services, etc. There are also leaflets on each of the individual library units.

Findings

The percentage findings for all of the sample groups are listed in its entirety in the appendix (Pg. I - II). Some of the basic findings from the survey were:

1. 57% of the people in the library sample looked at the poster display. A smaller percentage of the people in the class samples had looked at the display (30% in the class sample and 26% in the control group).
2. The group that looked at the posters had a higher percentage of correct answers on all the questions except no. 4- 'If only the editor of a book is known, can that book be found through the card catalog?' (in class and library samples); no. 7 I- identifying list of words (control group only); and no. 7 II (library sample only).

3. Somewhat paradoxically, the group that looked at the posters also had a higher percentage of incorrect answers on almost all of the questions (in all three groups).

4. The apparent inconsistency between findings 2 and 3 are explained by the fact that the group that did not look at the posters tended to answer 'Don't know' (a neutral response) more often than the group that did look at the posters. For a clear illustration of this point, see results on question no. 3 in any of the groups.

5. The study demonstrated that user knowledge about the card catalog increased after reading the posters but that this positive effect was 'negated' by a corresponding increase in incorrect knowledge about the card catalog.

Discussion

The results from the survey raise several questions:

1) Would a different format (e.g. audio-visual) have been more effective in transmitting information than the poster format?

2) Could the same display been promoted in a different manner which would have made it more effective (e.g. have classes told by their insturctors to read the poster display)?

3) Was the subject matter of essentially marginal interest to library patrons and was this responsible for the results?

The study which was performed cannot answer these questions but we can speculate. All three points have validity but I would submit that it is alternative number three which was the primary reason for the poor results. It is possible that a well prepared audio-visual display would yield better results. It is almost certain that if students in the classes were told to read the posters by their instructors the results would have been better. This study, however, was concerned with the effectiveness of the unit as a voluntary means of self-instruction. From experience, it appears that most library patrons have little desire to learn about the various features of the card catalog. Librarians realize that filing arrangements in the card catalog are complex and that it is essential to know at least the elementary rules governing the catalog in order to utilize it effectively. Most library patrons do not have the patience or desire to learn about the various features of the card catalog by reading a poster display (or, I feel, by viewing

an audio-visual display). The most important informational need that can be effectively dealt with in such a display, regardless of the format, appears to be location information. How to find a book once a person has a call number, location of periodicals, and maps of the floor layouts are all of greater concern than the fact that single surnames file ahead of titles of the same name.

The question arises, was the display a success or failure? At best, the results are mixed. From an aesthetic point of view, it has been a success. While no data was collected, remarks by faculty, students, and library staff indicated that the unit was attractive and that the information presented was clear and informative. The fact that the display accomodates the library leaflets also met with much approval. On the negative side, the results of the survey suggest that instruction about the card catalog cannot be done by the use of a passive instrument.

Conclusion

When creating displays, the library should emphasize directional aids instead of instructional aids. The recent installation of a location directory on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Purdy Library is a good example of the more 'practical' aid which can be developed. The creation of 'point-of-use' aids is an area worth exploring. Other libraries have found such aids to be an effective means of dealing with repetitive questions faced by reference librarians.[4] Library instruction is probably the most effective way to impart information about library research and the effective utilization of library resources. A library instruction program begun at the Purdy Library this past year has already demonstrated its effectiveness.

The development of any aid or program geared to the general library users should bear in mind two simple points:

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[4]Jeffrey J. Gardner, "Point-of-Use Library Instruction" Drexel Quarterly 8 (July, 1972), 281-85.

1. Most library patrons have limited knowledge about the organization and resources of a large research library.

2. Aids designed to assist library users should be limited to a very narrow range of information (i.e. directional information, how to use a specific reference tool, etc.).

These points seem rather obvious but in fact are often overlooked by librarians. The challenge of making a complex organizational structure comprehensible to a wide range of users is a goal worth striving towards.

APPENDIX

	PRE-POSTER (library sample) N=85	PRE-POSTER (class sample) N=239	POST-POSTER (library sample) N=39 Did Look	POST-POSTER (library sample) N=52 Did Not Look	POST-POSTER (class sample) N=61 Did Look	POST-POSTER (class sample) N=141 Did Not Look	CONTROL GROUP N=36 Did Look	CONTROL GROUP N=101 Did Not Look
3:	A- 31%	A- 21%	A- 37%	31%	A- 30%	16%	A- 39%	28%
	B- 13%*	B- 17%*	B- 17%*	8%*	B- 21%*	10%*	B- 19%*	8%*
	C- 56%	C- 62%	C- 46%	62%	C- 49%	74%	C- 42%	64%
4:	A- 40%*	A- 32%*	A- 29%*	46%*	A- 26%*	34%*	A- 39%*	35%*
	B- 16%	B- 20%	B- 19%	5%	B- 26%	14%	B- 14%	9%
	C- 44%	C- 49%	C- 52%	49%	C- 48%	52%	C- 47%	56%
5:	A- 14%	A- 26%	A- 23%	18%	A- 15%	16%	A- 22%	40%
	B- 66%*	B- 52%*	B- 65%*	49%*	B- 74%*	51%*	B- 64%*	40%*
	C- 0%	C- 2%	C- 0%	3%	C- 2%	2%	C- 0%	2%
	D- 11%	D- 14%	D- 6%	18%	D- 5%	25%	D- 14%	19%
	other- 9%	other- 6%	other- 6%	13%	other- 5%	6%	other- 0%	0%
6:	A- 53%	A- 31%	A- 50%	31%	A- 41%	26%	A- 47%	32%
	B- 12%	B- 6%	B- 6%	5%	B- 7%	4%	B- 14%	6%
	C- 6%*	C- 4%*	C- 15%*	10%*	C- 26%*	9%*	C- 14%*	3%*
	D- 24%	D- 54%	D- 27%	52%	D- 26%	57%	D- 25%	59%
	other- 6%	other- 4%	other- 2%	3%	other- 0%	4%	other- 0%	0%

* Indicates Correct Answer

	PRE-POSTER (library sample) N=85	PRE-POSTER (class sample) N=219	POST-POSTER (library sample) N=39 Did Look	POST-POSTER (library sample) N=52 Did Not Look	POST-POSTER (class sample) N=61 Did Look	POST-POSTER (class sample) N=141 Did Not Look	CONTROL GROUP N=36 Did Look	CONTROL GROUP N=101 Did Not Look
7.I	A- 35%	A- 37%	A- 35%	33%	A- 28%	31%	A- 47%	27%
	B- 16%	B- 16%	B- 23%	15%	B- 23%	15%	B- 19%	23%
	C- 21%*	C- 17%*	C- 27%*	15%*	C- 30%*	25%*	C- 8%*	21%*
	D- 16%	D- 16%	D- 13%	26%	D- 11%	19%	D- 25%	29%
	other- 11%	other- 14%	other- 2%	10%	other- 8%	11%	other- 0%	1%
7.II	A- 46%	A- 38%*	A- 46%*	36%*	A- 44%*	39%*	A- 53%*	35%*
	B- 14%	B- 11%	B- 19%	13%	B- 21%	12%	B- 17%	7%
	C- 11%	C- 18%	C- 13%	13%	C- 11%	12%	C- 3%	19%
	D- 16%	D- 18%	D- 19%	31%	D- 11%	28%	D- 28%	38%
	other- 13%	other- 13%	other- 2%	8%	other- 11%	9%	other- 0%	2%
7.III	A- 38%	A- 39%	A- 48%	23%	A- 30%	39%	A- 39%	30%
	B- 11%	B- 10%	B- 8%	5%	B- 11%	10%	B- 6%	14%
	C- 20%*	C- 19%*	C- 25%*	28%*	C- 31%*	16%*	C- 28%*	22%*
	D- 18%	D- 19%	D- 17%	33%	D- 15%	26%	D- 28%	35%
	other- 14%	other- 13%	other- 2%	10%	other- 13%	10%	other- 0%	0%

* Indicates Correct Answer

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

PURDY LIBRARY SURVEY

The Purdy Library is interested in finding out some of the problems people encounter when using the library.

Your answers to the following questions will help us determine some of those problems.

1- Are you:

A- Wayne State University

a- Freshman_____
b- Sophomore_____
c- Junior_____
d- Senior_____
e- Graduate student_____
(includes Med. and Law students)

B- Wayne State University faculty_____

C- Other Wayne State University affiliation_____

D- Non-Wayne State University affiliation_____
(includes students from other schools)

2- The library has provided enough signs, leaflets, etc. so that someone using the library for the first time should be able to locate a magazine without too much trouble:

A- Strongly agree with statement_____

B- Somewhat agree with statement_____

C- Disagree with statement_____

D- Don't know_____

3- Every book, magazine, and U.S. government document owned by the library can be found listed in the main card catalog:

A- Yes_____

B- No_____

C- Don't know_____

4- If only the editor of a book is known, can that book be found through the card catalog?:

A- Yes_____

B- No_____

C- Don't know_____

(PLEASE TURN OVER)

5- Books written about a person (for example, books about William Shakespeare) are found in the:

A- Author/Title catalog_____

B- Subject catalog_____

C- Can't be found without knowing the specific titles_____

D- Don't know_____

6- Catalog cards in the Purdy Library are filed:

A- Letter-by-letter_____

B- Concept-by-concept_____

C- Word-by-word_____

D- Don't know_____

7- For each of the three lists below, indicate if the list is arranged:

A- Letter-by-letter

B- Concept-by-concept

C- Word-by-word

D- Don't know

I	II	III
Kernel functions	Far and near	Grammar of American politics
Key materials	Far away children	Grand chain
Key sorting	Fare exchange	Grand inquisitor
Keyboard instruments	Fares please	Grandfather and I
Keynes and the classics	Farewell my darling	Granger country
Keys to the future	Far into the night	Granite controversy

Answer: _____ _____ _____

8- Have you looked at the 'Library Info' display located near the card catalog in the Purdy Library?:

A- Yes_____

B- No_____

9- Use the rest of this sheet to make comments about the ease or difficulty of using the Purdy Library:

PROPOSAL FOR A VISUAL DISPLAY ON THE USE OF THE CARD CATALOG

Purpose and Need:

Any large university card catalog is difficult for patrons to use. The card catalog at the Purdy Library is no exception. Before the Reference Department moved to the first floor, catalog assistance was provided at a special desk near the card catalog (Catalog Assistance Desk - CAD). Catalog assistance is now provided from the reference desk when a patron asks for help. In addition, the library has produced leaflets on catalog filing rules and other aspects of finding books and other materials.

The Reference Services Committee, in an attempt to have the library assume a more active role in library instruction, recommended that the library purchase a freestanding panel display and have posters dealing with the use of the card catalog. A script was prepared by a subcommittee of the Reference Services Committee and then sent to the Reference Department for implementation. The script has been revised by R. Allen and is ready to be submitted to the Center for Instructional Technology for production.

The posters will cover three major areas:

1 -- Explain the basic arrangement of the card catalog.

2 -- Give examples of the kind of information that can be found on the catalog card.

3 -- Acquaint patrons with the limitations of the card catalog.

The poster display will provide a number of improvements for patrons over the present situation. Some of the advantages will be:

1 -- It will be located at the source of the problem (i.e. the card catalog).

2 -- It will reach a much larger group of patrons than is presently assisted by the reference librarians or the leaflets.

3 -- It will be a permanent self instructional source of reference for patrons and can be consulted without the aid of a reference librarian.

Goals:

The display is expected to accomplish at least three things:

1 -- Provide new information to a certain percentage of people who use the library.

2 -- Serve as a public relations tool by promoting the availability of other services and aids (Reference Service Department Leaflets).

3 -- Create an environment that makes patrons more comfortable about seeking help when they have a problem.

Evaluation:

The poster display will be evaluated by the use of a questionnaire distributed at the card catalog. The questionnaire will be distributed at regular intervals during the first half of the Summer and Fall quarters. The display will be installed after the Summer survey is completed.

Handing out the questionnaire at the card catalog has the advantage of sampling a group of patrons who are most likely to benefit from the visual display (i.e. patrons who use the card catalog). Although the pre-poster and post-poster sample will contain different groups of people the results will still be valid. Both samples will be chosen randomly from the same population (i.e. patrons who use the card catalog). The biographical portion on the questionnaire will enable us to determine if the two samples are comparable.

In addition to the questionnaire a count will be taken on the number of 'Library Leaflets' picked up during a two week period before the visual display is installed and for a similar period of time after the posters are put up. Several references are made in the posters to the 'Library Leaflets'. An increase in the demand for the leaflets would be one indication of the effectiveness of the posters.

Costs:

The cost for the display and posters will be approximately $760 ($400 for the freestanding display and $360 for the posters). The cost for producing additional sets would be approximately $60 (plus the $400 for the display stand).

Additional money will be needed for producing the questionnaires. Also needed will be money for 50-100 hours of student assistance time to tabulate the results. Approximately 1,000 questionnaires will be needed.